

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Daily Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

September 2, 2011

Vice President Biden Talks Communication, Shares Journey with Chinese Students	1
U.S. Pledge to Horn of Africa Hunger Tops \$600 Million.....	1
Guiding Filipinos in the Online Market.....	2
Chipmaker Targets Energy Waste.....	2

Vice President Biden Talks Communication, Shares Journey with Chinese Students

By MacKenzie C. Babb | Staff Writer

Washington — Vice President Biden shared with Chinese university students his journey to overcome a speech impediment in remarks that highlighted communication and understanding among nations as critical to effective international relations.

“Language, speech, interchange, openness, communication — that is the material that can be used to lessen the possibility of the unintended conflict,” Biden said during a question-and-answer session with students at Sichuan University in Chengdu, China, August 21. He called speech the “currency of understanding” and said language provides people a critical platform on which to communicate their ideas.

He thanked the students for addressing him in English and expressed regret that he could not return the favor by speaking to them in Chinese. Biden said that Chinese and American students studying to become bilingual will help bridge the language gap and enable the United States and China to better understand each other in the future.

Praised by one of the students as a “veteran and accomplished public speaker,” Biden responded by telling the group that his ability to communicate clearly has not been without challenges.

“I was a serious stutterer when I was in school as a child, as a high school student and even into college,” the vice president told the students. Biden said he worked for years to overcome the problem.

“I practiced very, very hard by myself, standing in front of a mirror, trying to enunciate without contorting my face,” he said.

Biden also addressed the stigma of speech impediments.

“There’s tens of millions of people around the world trapped with a keen mind and a big heart, trapped inside of a body that cannot articulate what they feel,” he said.

Enhancing understanding through strategic communication between the United States and China was a top priority of Biden’s five-day visit to Beijing and Chengdu, along with building stronger relations among top U.S. and Chinese leaders. White House officials said the trip marked an investment in the future of U.S.-China cooperation.

Biden was in the country as a guest of Chinese Vice President Xi Jinping, and his visit was the first in a series

of planned reciprocal visits between the vice presidents announced by President Obama and Chinese President Hu Jintao during Hu’s state visit to Washington earlier in 2011.

During his time in China, Biden talked with Xi, Hu and other high-level Chinese officials about bilateral, regional and global issues such as the global economy, energy, international cooperation, military ties, the environment and sustainable development.

After visiting Beijing and Chengdu, the vice president traveled to Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, and then to Tokyo and Sendai in Japan as part of a nine-day trip that White House officials say showcases the Obama administration’s efforts to “renew and intensify the U.S. role in Asia.”

U.S. Pledge to Horn of Africa Hunger Tops \$600 Million

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer

Washington — The U.S. funding commitment to alleviate the massive humanitarian disaster in the Horn of Africa has passed the \$600 million mark after a top aid official announced a \$23 million increase August 31.

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah made the announcement at a community forum in Minneapolis. He said \$10 million of the latest allocation will be devoted to the needs of people in Somalia. Prior to this latest allocation, the United States had pledged about \$580 million to feed the hungry and ease suffering in the region.

An estimated 4.6 million people in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia benefit from U.S. assistance. The worst drought in 60 years and ensuing agricultural failures have been major factors in causing the food crisis in the region. For the people of Somalia, ongoing violence and the activity of the al-Shabaab terrorist group have worsened conditions and escalated a crisis into famine in six districts. Famine is expected to spread more widely through southern Somalia in the weeks to come, according to one recent assessment.

The food shortages in Somalia began in early 2011, but al-Shabaab barred international humanitarian assistance workers from entering territory it controlled and refused shipments of food.

An estimated 12.4 million people in eastern Africa are at risk of malnutrition. People have responded to deprivation with their feet, leaving their villages and heading to refugee camps on Somalia’s borders. Ethiopia and Kenya host the camps even while their domestic populations also suffer from hunger and malnutrition.

USAID's Shah also told the Minneapolis forum, organized by U.S. Representative Keith Ellison, that the United States is committed to relieving the crisis of the current moment, but also to helping the region develop better agricultural practices to break a recurring pattern of food shortages.

The Obama administration has developed a program called Feed the Future, which seeks to create greater food security in the region through better agricultural skills, techniques and infrastructure development.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton has been a high-profile advocate of Feed the Future. Describing the program in August to a Washington audience, Clinton said the plan is designed to help farmers at the local level, but it also calls on governments to adopt new policies on a national level. "They need to move toward free trade in grain imports and exports," Clinton said. "They need to improve credit and land-use policies to support farmers and herders. They need to ensure that public grain reserves are available when shortages loom. And they need to welcome new technologies to bolster drought tolerance, disease resistance and crop yields."

Guiding Filipinos in the Online Market

By Andrzej Zwaniecki | Staff Writer

Washington — "I spend almost half of my life nowadays online. I use the Internet as the sounding board of my advocacy, thoughts, dreams and success. I experience failure through it as well. Without the Internet, I wouldn't be anywhere near where I am today." The writer of these words today is at the top of the information technology (IT) industry in the Philippines: She is Janette Toral, a business leader and one of the most successful IT entrepreneurs in the country.

Toral became fascinated with computers at a time when not many people owned them. As a teenager, she played with a spreadsheet program on her aunt's machine. In the mid-1980s, Toral studied computer languages and programs on her own and in computer schools. In 1989, she got her first job as a computer tutor. Since then, her professional career has branched out in many directions, following the Internet's development and IT sector expansion.

"I realized early that information technology keeps changing fast," she said. "So I knew I couldn't focus on just one type of software or activity."

As she acquired new skills, her activities covered many areas. Toral has been called a consultant, trainer, educator, lobbyist, blogger, researcher, writer, ambassador, community leader and "the mother of electronic commerce law in the Philippines." These labels

describe not only the broad range of her professional ventures, but also the passion she invests in them.

However, the term Toral believes characterizes her best — social entrepreneur — is not among those used in her profiles. "I deal with issues not only to earn profits, but also to make things better in the market," she said. For example, she created the DigitalFilipino online community to educate her compatriots about e-commerce and facilitate knowledge sharing and business networking. The club offers members free training, for example, in search-engine and social-media marketing.

Toral is also called an Internet "evangelist," for good reason. She believes the Internet is reshaping the world and boosting people's potential because, thanks to it, "you can be who you want to be" and nations can accelerate their development and advance economically. That is why, in 1997, she founded the Philippine Internet Commerce Society and lobbied hard for the passage of an e-commerce law. The law passed in 2000, making it much easier for Philippine companies to conduct online business worldwide.

Toral views her greatest accomplishment, on which she received solid backing from other IT leaders, as somewhat incomplete. Since 2002, she has been campaigning for the application in the Philippines of the Capability Maturity Model (CMM) of standards in developing software. CMM certification, she says, would ensure a higher quality of software development and help Philippine software companies compete more effectively, particularly in the international market.

To help spread the idea, Toral used her own money to hire certified trainers from India and lobbied the government to lend its support to the concept. The government eventually agreed to do it, but it didn't address the issues she views as the ultimate goal — to make the Philippines capable of depending on its own CMM trainers and assessors. "I continue to work on it," the tireless Toral said.

Chipmaker Targets Energy Waste

By Karin Rives | Staff Writer

Washington — Some 1.6 billion cellphones and mobile devices were sold worldwide in 2010. Each came equipped with a charger that plugs into an electrical outlet.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency estimates that no fewer than 10 billion chargers and other so-called AC-DC power supplies are used for computers, phones and other consumer products around the globe. Together, they waste huge amounts of energy — roughly 40 percent of the power they transfer from the outlet to the gadget.

It's a problem that concerns Weili Dai, the co-founder of California-based Marvell Technology Group. Since starting her semiconductor company in 1995 with her husband, Sehat Sutardja, and his brother, Pantas, Dai has always been proud of Marvell's record on energy efficiency.

"Not only did we say, 'We have to be the best' [maker of semiconductors], but we also always focused on producing low-power technology," she said.

Marvell is now pushing technology that can dramatically reduce power waste in all consumer electronics. Known as power factor correction, it's an electronic chip that "tricks" personal computers, laptops, smartphones, computer tablets, printers and other gadgets into taking better advantage of the electric current.

While Marvell is finding a global market for its power-saving chips, Dai believes that only when all manufacturers are required to pursue smarter power solutions will the true environmental improvement be felt.

"Right now, we're kind of the cheerleader, and we're driving it," she said. "But we'd like to have the entire electronic industry make their products greener. We have a way to solve this problem, but everybody needs to apply it."

So Dai's team has been working with the local congressman representing California's high-tech Silicon Valley on legislation that would standardize "smart" power technology for consumer electronics and provide incentives for manufacturers in the United States to adopt such technology.

Marvell estimates that if power factor correction technology were mandated, it would save the United States nearly \$3 billion in annual energy costs and cut the nation's carbon-dioxide emissions by 24 million tons each year.

It would also boost Marvell's bottom line. The company is heavily invested in low-power technologies and is betting on a growing market for energy-smart electronics.

At its Santa Clara, California, headquarters, meanwhile, Marvell has embarked on a campaign dubbed "Footprint Zero" to gradually make its company operations carbon-neutral. A new computerized lighting control system, for example, is using 60 percent less electricity than a conventional lighting system would. Energy-efficient fluorescent and LED light bulbs in the company's offices have also shaved electricity consumption.

The company, which employs 5,700 worldwide, is taking

its Footprint Zero campaign to its campuses on several continents. Changes in technology and infrastructure are needed "to save our country and our world," Dai said.

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)